



Be the Best that You can Be

Cedarwood School

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Autism

The month of April is World Autism Awareness month and the 2nd of April 2019 marked Autism Awareness Day. People around the world use blue, wearing blue, lighting buildings up blue etc., to raise public awareness of autism.

Children with autism experience the following difficulties:

Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts:

- Deficits in **social-emotional reciprocity**, ranging, for example, from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back-and-forth conversation; to reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect; to failure to initiate or respond to social interactions.
- Deficits in **nonverbal communicative behaviours** used for social interaction, ranging, for example, from poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication; to abnormalities in eye contact and body language or deficits in understanding and use of gestures; to a total lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication.
- Deficits in developing, **maintaining, and understanding relationships**, ranging, for example, from difficulties adjusting behaviour to suit various social contexts; to difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends; to absence of interest in peers.



Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities:

- **Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements**, use of objects, or speech (e.g., simple motor stereotypies, lining up toys or flipping objects, echolalia, idiosyncratic phrases).
- Insistence on sameness, **inflexible adherence to routines**, or ritualized patterns or verbal nonverbal behaviour (e.g., extreme distress at small changes, difficulties with transitions, rigid thinking patterns, greeting rituals, need to take same route or eat same food every day).



CEDARWOODSCHOOL
(Association incorporated under Section 21 - not for gain)
Fundraising Number: 01 101753 000 2
Co registration number 1997/018168/08
Umalusi Accreditation No. 17 SCH01 00304





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- Highly restricted, **fixated interests** that are abnormal in intensity or focus (e.g., strong attachment to or preoccupation with unusual objects, excessively circumscribed or perseverative interest).
- **Hyper- or hypo reactivity** to sensory input or unusual interests in sensory aspects of the environment (e.g., apparent indifference to pain/temperature, adverse response to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, visual fascination with lights or movement).



10 things that children with autism wish you knew:

(Taken from an article by Helen Driver and Joanna Reynolds originally published on *The Conversation*.)

1. **I am a unique person.** I have lots of different skills and abilities as well as things I find difficult. Just because I have autism doesn't mean I am the same as everyone else with autism. Love and acceptance from those around me help me thrive.
2. **I hear, see and feel the world differently from you.** I find some noises, smells, tastes or lights stressful, frightening or even physically painful. Touch can overwhelm me, and I might not like hugs. I can experience detail that you might miss, and I can enjoy and find funny or exciting. Come and share those things with me.
3. **I want friends just like everyone else.** My social behavior might seem different from other people's. Even if I do use verbal language, communication and interaction can be difficult and I can find reading non-verbal cues and other people's body language very difficult.
4. **Often my behavior is my way of communicating.** If I am not able to express my thoughts and feelings, I can become frustrated, sad and angry. People may see my behavior as difficult, naughty or deliberately challenging, but it is likely my way of communicating. Please be patient and try and understand what I am communicating.
5. **Interact with me in ways that I can understand.** Slow down and give me time. Be clear about what you say and give me the chance to react – it takes up to 10-15 seconds for me to process what you say. Don't take over our interaction. Rather give me space and time to respond. When you learn to listen with all your senses you will realize how much I have to say.
6. **I live in the here and now and don't always understand the bigger picture.** Understanding things in context may be difficult for me. Show me pictures and let me know what to expect and I will be able to join in more easily.



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7. **I am anxious and worry a lot.** This is because I have difficulty understanding the world and communicating my thoughts and needs. The way I see, hear or feel the world can be painful, and the world can be a frightening and confusing place for me. When something happens or changes suddenly, I may panic. People might think I'm being silly, but I can be truly terrified.
8. **Routine is important to me.** It makes me feel safe helps me to cope. That doesn't mean that I don't want to experience new things. I just need more support to join in with the world. With your help I can find activities and sports that I will enjoy, and you can enjoy with me. Find out what helps to calm me. If I am less anxious, I can cope with more.
9. **I need your help to access the world and to learn.** You just need to take time to understand how I make sense of the world and make learning relevant to me. Everyone learns in different ways. I might need to move and use visual resources, but I love to achieve and learn – it's a great way to help me feel confident.
10. **Think about what I can do, not what I can't.** I am a sociable, whole person who is capable of learning. I may be more interested in specific subjects and pick up on the detail, but this is my interest. Love me, work with me and enjoy what I bring to the world.

